

**Remarks by U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Thomas C. Pierce  
Commissioning of Facilities at the University of Guyana under Project  
“Creating an Enabling Environment for People with Disabilities”  
Monday, June 27, 2011**

Good morning... I am honoured to join you for today’s commissioning ceremony, and pleased that the University of Guyana is committed to inclusion of people with disabilities in higher learning.

In 2009, former President George H. W. Bush congratulated President Obama on his remembrance of the 19th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In his remarks, the former President said, "...there is always more to be done, which is why it's good not only to celebrate our successes, but to look forward at what still must be done. As long as we never forget that every life is a miracle and each person has something to contribute, we will finish the job."

This is a challenge we share. In July 2009, the United States joined 142 other countries in signing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. That document promotes dignity, rights, and **inclusive** development.

In her statement commemorating International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Secretary Clinton noted that we are also invested in including disability rights as a core focus of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. She said, in part:

"This global undertaking to eradicate extreme poverty and inequality offers hope to millions of people across the developing world, but much remains to be done for people with disabilities, particularly disabled women and girls. We cannot hope to achieve the Millennium Development Goals when those with disabilities are denied the opportunity to lead empowered and autonomous lives ... Disabled people deserve equal access and opportunity within society."

We have adopted the policy that U.S. Government agencies will not discriminate against people with disabilities and will work to ensure their inclusion in U.S.-funded programs and activities.

For decades, our development efforts have included a wide range of activities that benefit persons with disabilities, both directly and indirectly. In Guyana, such support has been wide-ranging and has involved educating family members and

relatives on using new techniques in managing their lives; refurbishing the Ptolemey Reid Rehabilitation Centre and providing support for expansion of their vocational services; providing vocational skills training and information and communications technology training; supporting a multimedia campaign to highlight concerns of people with disabilities; providing school furnishings; developing a sign language manual and other support.

By adopting an inclusive approach, development organizations ensure that marginalized or excluded groups are incorporated into the development process.

It is to that end, we are able to gather today, to witness the commissioning of these facilities.

The results showcased here are the culmination of efforts directed at supporting greater inclusion at the University. These achievements are steps toward removing barriers and addressing rights of persons with disabilities. This is part of a larger and more comprehensive effort by the University to address these needs.

Like most of us gathered here today, people with disabilities have aspirations for higher education, are blessed with the intellect and commitment to pursue a higher degree in learning and aspire to enter careers that allow them to achieve their dreams. Society benefits from their intellect, experience and the contributions they make to their families and their communities. It is in our interest, and it is our duty, to support them in doing so.

The U.S. government is pleased to have contributed \$33,000 US dollars for the project that we are commemorating today under the United States Ambassador's Self-Help Fund and the P.L. 480 program.

With the support for these activities and those of the University being recognized, we reaffirm our commitment to being as inclusive as possible in our developmental efforts around the world. We welcome partnerships, such as this one with the University of Guyana and look forward to future possibilities of working together to enhance the lives of all Guyanese and specifically, those living with disabilities.

I will end with a quote by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, our 32nd President. President Roosevelt overcame polio, which had left him essentially paralyzed from the waist down. He said "We know that equality of individual ability has never existed and never will, but we do insist that equality of opportunity still must be sought."

And that is what we are here for today.

Thank You.